

After much Anticipation, Hope is regained as Hero's Take Flight: Operation Hero Flight Takes WWII Vets to DC

By Berni Davis, Editor

Hill Air Force Base- On Friday, September 14th, 2007, 127 World War II Veterans and their companions gathered at the Hill Aerospace Museum to prepare to fly to Washington DC to see the WWII Memorial. This opportunity was brought to these Veterans, all expenses paid, through the work of a nonprofit organization, Operation Hero Flight.

This flight was originally scheduled to leave in May, however, due to financial circumstances, the flight was cancelled. "He found out the night before [the flight was supposed to take off]. He cried when he couldn't go" said Manon Watson of her husband, WWII Vet Kenneth Watson who said he didn't think the flight would ever happen after that disappointment.

Initially, a group called "Our Unsung Hero's" was going to take the group to see the memorial, however, their ambition appeared to be larger than their bank accounts because the flight was cancelled at the last minute when they failed to secure the necessary accommodations for the trip. That was when Operation Hero Flight took over.

This is when fund raising efforts began. The group needed to raise over \$150,000 to make the trip happen. After much anticipation, hard work and several generous donations, the money was finally raised.

Many of the Veterans were skeptical, even as they waited in the hanger at Hill Air Force Base to load the plane. Still, there was a feeling of excitement and happiness, like children at Christmas.

Some of these Veterans wanted to go on the flight to see something they had not seen before, while others went to honor and remember their fellow service members who did not come home. Actually two Veterans who were scheduled for the original flight died waiting.

The Hero's send off began as the Veterans and family members loaded busses that would take them to the hanger, as they drove on to the Air Force base, Airmen gathered and saluted, the Veterans saluted back. "It was the first time I had ever felt honored", Watson said through tears.

The Hero's were then ushered to the hanger where hundreds of Airmen awaited along with reporters and family members for a send off ceremony featuring Governor Jon Huntsman, Congressman Rob Bishop, and Senator Jake Garn. Each offered inspiring and touching words. Congressman Bishop encouraged the Veterans to renew their memories and instill the resolve that their generation showed to their children and grandchildren. While Governor Huntsman told stories of the Veterans that he had met and choked up as he spoke of an Iwo Jima Vet who was one of two members of his unit to survive the battle.

After the speakers a video of WWII was shown, which left few dry eyes in the house. Then the Veterans said their good-byes, loaded the long awaited airplane through a row of sabers as an honor guard bid their farewell for another journey.



Members for Operation Hero Flight at the WWII Memorial in Washington, DC, From left to right, Melvin Lemon, SPC Kevin Boughten, David Haffen, Morgan Hawkes, Jack Helgesen, Elwin Petersen, Barbara Jacobsen, Wayne Braithwaite, Woody Johnsen, Norden Johnsen, Fred Johnsen, Jeff Burton (D.C. Bagpiper), Ray Stapley, Walt Stewart, Robert Edwart, Gene Silotti, Ed Salisbury

UPCOMING VETERANS' EVENTS

- **Oct 25: Symposium for Veterans Families and Communities** at Salt Lake Community College, Student Center, Oak Room; 4600 Redwood Rd. 1:30 pm- 4:30 pm for counselors and community leaders. 6:30-8:30 for Veterans and family members. Learn about issues facing today's Veterans in making the transition from combat to civilian life; how you can help and resources available.
- **Oct 27: Welcome To Your VA at VA Medical Center**, 500 Foothill BLVD., Parking Lot 1, Salt Lake City; 10am-4pm. Representatives from a variety of state and federal government and community organizations will provide information on services, education, job opportunities, benefits, family assistance and Veteran health care enrollment. (See pg 10 for information)
- **Nov 1: Veterans Entrepreneurial Workshop** VAMC BLDG. 9, 8:00 am 1:00 pm. Advance registration required, call 326-2372. At this conference you will gain the tools needed to start or advance your small business. Free for Veterans.
- **Nov 2: Homeless Veterans' Stand Down** at the George Wahlen VA Medical Center in Salt Lake City. Begins at 7:30 a.m.-2:30pm
- **Nov 9: Veterans Benefit and Job Fair** at South Town Expo Center, 2-8pm. Join us for information from various employers and Veterans organization to learn about your benefits.
- **Nov 10: Veterans Day Ceremony** at Utah State Veteran Cemetery, 17111 Camp Williams RD, Bluffdale, at 2 pm, Guest speaker Governor Jon Huntsman.
- **Nov 11: Veterans Day Concert** at University of Utah Huntsman Center at 7pm, free
- **Nov 11: Veterans Day: Parade in Murray City** at 11am
- **Nov 12: Golden Corral Military Appreciation Night:** Free meal at all Golden Corral Restaurants from 5-9pm for military and Veterans.
- **Nov 28: Symposium for Veterans Families and Committees**, Cedar City, Southern Utah University, Student Center Auditorium, see details above
- **Nov 29: Symposium for Veterans Families and Communities**, St. George, Dixie Center, Gardener Hall, details same as above.

Thoughts From the Editor . . .
What you don’t know can hurt you

By Berni Davis, Editor

A slogan that we commonly use at the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs is “Nobody Told Us” to support the idea that most Veterans do not know what benefits are available to them . It is partially because some were never told and partly because some do not remember what they were told.

However, regardless of why Veterans do not know what their benefits are, the fact remains that they do not know. Or worse than having no clue and knowing they have no clue about benefits, are the ones who think they know and what they don’t know is what is hurting them and their access to benefits.

Let me explain, recently I was speaking with a Veteran and a benefits briefing, as I often do. It actually took a little bit of coaxing to get the Veterans to talk to me because he thought there was nothing that I could tell him that he did not already know. Turns out he did know more than the average Veteran. He knew he needed to file a claim for service connected disability with the VA, and he knew he needed documentation of a disability and documentation that he was injured in service. However, what he didn’t know was that he could file his claim without these things.

He had waited for two years and was going to continue to wait possibly another year to get all the records he needed so he could hand over a neat little package to the VA and get his claim approved in ninety days. That’s what he thought he knew.

In reality, a claim will not get approved by the VA without the proper documentation of 1) injury or illness occurring or aggravated while on active duty; 2) a current disability; and 3) a connection between one and two. However, there are ways to begin a claim even if all of this evidence is still being gathered.

This individual was waiting for a Line of Duty (Military documentation of injury while on duty) to be completed before filing a claim. Even though this is a type of document that can be the difference between a VA rating and a denial, by waiting the Veteran is cutting himself off from possibly two years of benefits. Which, as the 10% rate, the VA pays \$115 per month, multiplied by 24 months, that is nearly \$3,000 that are being missed out on.

The thing that this Veteran did not know was that the VA recognizes “informal claims”, anything that a Veteran does, in writing, to express their intent to file for a benefit. This saves the date of claim and gives the Veteran one year from the date of informal claim to submit a formal claim, a signed application.

To file an informal claim with the VA, all you have to do is write a statement declaring what benefit you want to file for, such as disability for an injured knee, your name, address and signature, it also helps to add your Social Security number also. Then turn that into the VA. They will put you in the system and send you a letter about how you have to file a formal claim within a year or you will lose the date.

Protect your dates, compensation is paid back to the first day of the month following the filing of your claim. As long as all dates are properly abided by, you will not lose money waiting for documentation. One year to file formal claim after informal claim, one year to appeal after date of denial.

The Utah Veterans Voice

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LEGACY: History of the Utah National Guard from the Nauvoo Legion Era to Enduring Freedom

Book Review
By Larry J Dawson, Staff Writer

Dr. Richard C. Robert’s *LEGACY: History of the Utah National Guard from the Nauvoo Legion Era to Enduring Freedom* is an exceptional panorama of information, facts and historical pictures. Besides being a well written and a painstakingly documented history, it should occupy a place of honor on one’s coffee table for its quality pictures and its overall scholarship. Dr. Roberts skillfully weaves the threads of the Utah’s National Guard in the historical cloth of the history of Utah. The Guard isn’t just a backdrop, but a major player in the uniqueness of the state and its contribution to the United States of America.

The beginnings of Utah’s Guard evolved from the Nauvoo Legion in Illinois. The Mormons, who were driven from that state, took their militia with them to create the main military presence in the Utah Territory. Also contributing to the Legion were the Mormon Battalion who were enlisted to serve in the Mexican War. In this period, Dr. Roberts skillfully documents “Indian” troubles and artfully deals with the Legion’s participation in the “Mountain Meadow Massacre” and the “Utah War” where the Legion faced off against the Army of the United States. The elements of the Legion were very loose and community based. It could be argued that central control outside the leadership of the LDS Church did not exist.

Succeeding chapters are as riveting as the first. These chapters cleverly deal with the Guard’s role in protecting the people in times of natural disasters and even “mustering” for strike riot duty. While the book as a whole is extremely positive in nature, the author does not shy away from sensitive subjects that deal with the “questionable political” practices and times when the Guard had difficulties keeping its ranks manned.

Students of history will enjoy the examination of subjects that deal with the early days of the state. Professor Roberts doesn’t stop there. He writes chapters that bring the reader to the present. The sections dealing with World War II and the Korean Conflict are very engaging and demonstrate the changing mission of the Guard, its equipment, weapon systems and command structure. The second to the last chapter brings the reader to the beginning of this century and the final chapter is an excellent section dealing with the War on Terror. The conclusions offered in the final part are clear, succinct, and logical. It is gratifying to read such a fine synopsis.

Dr. Roberts has a 32 year career teaching history at Weber State University. He has an intuitive understanding of Utah and its people and as such makes connections between Utah’s citizens and its citizen soldiers. This is one of the great strengths of the book. Essentially, almost every Utahan has ties to its “Guard” and its various units and missions. That being the case, any reader will find the book enlightening, satisfying and will come away with the notion that the subject could not have been better addressed. This book is available for purchase at any Sam Wellers Book store

Register as a Veteran at
veterans.utah.gov

Thank You Marines

By Nina Bennett
Guest Columnist

This past summer, I have had the privilege of communicating with several Marines who are currently deployed in Iraq. Through letters and emails they’ve shared with me their activities, thoughts, and hopes for the future. Their words are humorous, attitudes upbeat, and the common thread that runs through them all is gratefulness. Surprisingly, they do not talk about what they have missed at home, but what they have gained by being in situations that most of us would deem unbearable.

They have taught me that our everyday existence, no matter where we are or what we are doing, is determined by our attitudes. One young Marine told me, “Everyone needs to be happy and be able to laugh. I just do my best to keep people happy.” They ask only for support, which sustains them, and for our happiness, which inspires them.

The contact with these Marines has showed me that sharing our experiences of life with one another is what teaches us; for our humanity is all the same and the smallest contribution can create the biggest impact, like a ripple in a tide.

They have given me the gift of knowing that what we can learn from those who have been through the worst of life is what makes up the best of life: kindness, love, sacrifice, helping your fellow man, and optimism.

It is fall and these Marines are coming home- not a single one in their Company killed or wounded. This thank you is not just for the fighting they have done, but also for their writing. Freedom is not free but connecting to another person and learning from them is.

Scholarship Opportunity
Military Order of the Purple Heart would like to announce that scholarship opportunities are available to combat veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan from the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans. Applications can be obtained through the website at www.horatioalger.org.
The scholarship is \$1250 per year for a student seeking a Bachelors Degree. He/she must be honorably discharged and have a 2.0 GPA.

The Fort Douglas Military Museum, Utah National Guard, has a need for Volunteers to support the Museum’s Staff, to carry on its day-to-day operations. All interested Military or Veterans are encourage to enquire by calling (801) 581-1251

Utah Department of Veterans Affairs Mission Statement
To honor and recognize the service of Utah Veterans as their advocate relative to veterans benefits, assist former and present members of the U.S. Armed Forces both active and reserve and their dependents in preparing claims for and securing such compensation, health services, education and vocational training, and other benefits or privileges to which they may be entitled under Federal or State law or regulation by virtue of their service in the military.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

The American Legion – Why we need YOU!



With over 2.7 million members, The American Legion is the world's largest veteran's organization. That strength in membership has gotten significantly smaller throughout the past decade. Why? The majority of the American Legion members come from "the greatest generation", World War II veterans who are passing on at an average of 1000 per day. These members were key in the creation of benefits that most of us now take for granted. Programs such as the GI Bill (originally authored by the Legion), which allowed 10 million veterans to attend college for free and which has been shown to have created a 700% benefit to the United States. Though the cost of the original GI Bill was thought to be staggering, the earning power of those 10 million veterans created seven times the amount invested in increased tax revenue.

Included in those 10 million veterans who received a college education and home loans included: Two presidents, 238,000 teachers, 14 Nobel Prize winners, 11 Pulitzer prize winners, 38 US congressmen, numerous US senators, and most likely, the vast majority of those reading this, their fathers and/or grandfathers.

The American Legion continues to press on with these efforts every day in town councils, in government boards, in state legislatures, and on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. This organization works tirelessly for the maintenance of ongoing veteran's benefits and ensuring new benefits as needs arise. The strength of their persuasion with the lawmakers is directly related to the strength of the membership they represent. As the opinions of society become more diversified, that intransigent power of a common goal and without political party affiliation echoes loudly in the meeting rooms and chambers of Congress.

This is why it is important for each and every veteran to seek membership in The American Legion. To continue to fight for their comrades in arms, to aid those in need, to educate the youth of this country about the principles of justice and freedom and democracy. That by assisting others they will help themselves. And, that the small cost of membership is an investment that ultimately pays very large dividends indeed.

Thanks for your support,
Greg Rowley
Adjutant

Dear Editor

**Send your letters to: Editor
Utah Department of Veterans
Affairs PO Box 58897
Salt Lake City, UT 84158-0897**

When I went into the studio to record "A Soldier's Prayer" I knew this song was something special and I hoped that it might strike a chord with the American people.

Thankfully it has and I have been able to help in my own small way by having the net proceeds from a "Soldier's Prayer" go directly to the Wounded Warrior Project to help our brave men and women of the Armed Forces that have been injured in the war on terrorism.

I am thankful to my record label for their support in this cause and Wal-Mart for giving my music a home, but my biggest thanks goes to all the men and women of the military and their families who through the years have sacrificed so much to preserve our precious freedoms.

Sincerely,
Collin Ray
Country Music Artist, Sony Records, Nashville

Attention Iron County Vietnam Veterans

The Cedar City Vietnam Memorial Committee, in conjunction with the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars organizations, is seeking any information regarding individuals who...

(1)...served in Vietnam—WITH A RESIDENT ADDRESS AND/OR ZIP CODE IN IRON COUNTY—at the time of their entry into military service between the years of 1964 and 1975.

(2)...served in Korea—WITH A RESIDENT ADDRESS AND/OR ZIP CODE IN IRON COUNTY—at the time of their entry into military service between the dates of June, 1950 and July, 1954.

The request is to memorialize those veterans who served from Iron county as part of a Rotary Centennial Veterans Park in Cedar City, Utah. DD-214 and/or service numbers are appreciated, information supplied must be in writing to Col Al Matheson 8847 West 2200 South Cedar City, Utah 84720 or email to Citabriair@yahoo.com

Dear Editor,

Heading towards Veterans Day – we wanted to share this with the members of your organization.

The song is called "In The Name Of Freedom". It is a video of a song I wrote and recorded to say THANK YOU to the men and women who have served and who continue to serve our country... We put it on YouTube because it's free – easy to use and thought the message may spread faster that way.

I was driving in my van thinking about what a wonderful life we have. My three kids were playing in the back – and I began to think about all the men and women who have given of themselves for our country, for our freedom. I wondered if these men and women knew there were people today thankful for their sacrifice. I wondered if the men and women serving today knew. I wanted to convey a message to them... to their families... to our country... to my kids. I want my children to grow up knowing that their freedom has come at a price... That keeping our freedom will cost some men and women their very lives... I want them to look at our flag and feel a sense of pride and gratefulness when we sing our anthem or say our national pledge. I want them to learn and remember...

The words "Thank you seems hardly enough.." came to my mind and before I could get home, on a crinkled napkin were the lyrics to this song "In The Name Of Freedom" To the men and women who have served our country and to men and women who continue to serve in every capacity – I want to say thank you. I know I am not alone in this feeling and sometimes a song like this can draw people together to convey something special. That is my hope and the reason for doing this project. It's time to say thank you.

Our family thought it would be great to find a way to share this message for this Veterans Day. If you know someone who would appreciate the message of thanks, feel free to pass it on. We hope it stirs your heart as it has ours to say ...Thanks.

Jim and Lisa Huertas

In The Name Of Freedom

lisajeanned@inthenameoffreedom.com

www.inthenameoffreedom.com

The following is a story about the Marines and Navy Corpsmen depicted in the Iwo Jima Memorial in Washington DC.

"My name is James Bradley and I'm from Antigo, Wisconsin My dad is on that statue, and I just wrote a book called "Flags of Our Fathers" which is #5 on the New York Times Best Seller list right now. It is the story of the six boys you see behind me.

"Six boys raised the flag. The first guy putting the pole in the ground is Harlon Block*. Harlon was an all-state football player. He enlisted in the Marine Corps with all the senior members of his football team. They were off to play another type of game. A game called "War." But it didn't turn out to be a game. Harlon, at the age of 21, died with his intestines in his hands. I don't say that to gross you out, I say that because there are people who stand in front of this statue and talk about the glory of war. You guys need to know that most of the boys in Iwo Jima were 17, 18, and 19 years old – and it was so hard that the ones who did make it home would never even talk to their families about it.

"The next guy is Rene Gagnon from New Hampshire. If you took Rene's helmet off at the moment this photo was taken and looked in the webbing of that helmet, you would find a photograph, a photograph of his girlfriend.

Rene put that in there for protection because he was scared. He was 18 years old. It was just boys who won the battle of Iwo Jima. Boys. Not old men. "The next guy here, the third guy in this tableau, was Sergeant Mike Strank.

Mike is my hero. He was the hero of all these guys. They called him the "old man" because he was so old. He was already 24. When



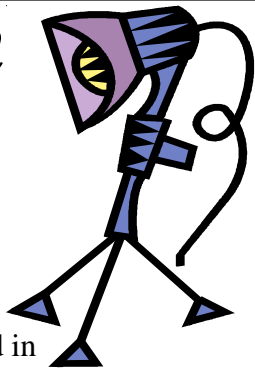
The Marine Corps Memorial in Washington DC is an exact replica of the photo taken on Iwo Jima.

Continued on page 5

Spotlighted Veteran

William E Christoffersen

By Berni Jo Davis, Editor



Bill Christoffersen of Salt Lake City, has been involved with Veterans Organizations since 1945, before he was discharged from the US Army. Bill served in the US and South Pacific in WWII as an Army Infantryman.

Today, Bill has lifetime memberships with the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He has held multiple elected and appointed positions in the American Legion including District Department, National, Chairman National Economic Commission for the National Executive Committee.

Bill was elected State commander in 1959 with the distinction of being the youngest Commander in the Nation. He also travelled over 30,000 miles across the state on a budget of only \$400.00 which was shared with the two Department Vice Commanders.

These accomplishments are only part of the reasons that Bill is this editions Spotlight Veteran, Bill has been “in the trenches” fighting for Veterans legislation, rights and benefits for several years now. He spends many winters on Capitol Hill working with the State Legislature in order to secure Legislation that is helpful to Veterans and deter legislation that is harmful.

Through this technique, Bill lobbied the Utah Convention Bureau, Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce, Legislature and the National American Legion in order to have Salt Lake City host the American Legion National Convention. This happened not only in 1984 but also in 1996 and 2006. All of these conventions were a direct result of Bill’s persistence.

Bill also played a principle role in the dedication of Veterans Memorial Park and Cemetery at Camp Williams. He lobbied the state legislature and worked as the Chairman of the American Legion to raise the matching funds necessary to secure this land. It was dedicated on Memorial Day 1990. He had a similar role in securing the Veterans Nursing Home in Salt Lake City, and the creation of a statewide Veterans Outreach program which is still running successfully.

Bill has also fought for programs including Veterans training and employment, small business programs, having military service count toward professional certificates, Veteran’s Memorial Highway, Flag Protection, WWII Memorial funding, and a National Energy Program.

These are only a few of Bill’s many projects and programs that he has either implemented, authored or campaigned for. It is this dedication and willingness to serve fellow Veterans that make Bill Christoffersen our Spotlighted Veteran.

If you know someone who provides service to Veterans and the community and you would like to nominate them as our “Spotlighted Veteran” please send a letter describing their service and why they should be chosen to Veterans Voice, Spotlighted Veteran PO Box 58897 Salt Lake City, UT 84158-0897

VFW Service Officer Mike Jensen has been hired by the VFW’s Washington DC Office to fill the position of National Veterans Service Pre-Discharge Claims Representative.

He will review VA rating decisions submitted under the VA’s BDD (Benefits Delivery at Discharge) and Pre Discharge programs for completeness and correctness. This will be done as a part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars veterans’ outreach programs at military installations/facilities in the Western Area US. However, until a qualified replacement is found and adequately trained, Mike will continue his service officer work with the VFW. Lowell Tripp is the new Assistant Department Service Officer.

Department of Workforce Services Recognizes Excellence

By Pedro Avalle, Utah Department of Workforce Services

Utah Department of Workforce Services recently presented the Eagle Awards for Excellent Services to Veterans to Barbara Larsen, Kanab; Heather Knowlton, Salt Lake City; Gumey Benavidez, Roy; Christine Montgomery, Vernal; and Cathy Devereaux, Spanish Fork, at the Annual Veterans Conference in St. George Utah. The Eagle Award is recognition of outstanding and excellent services to Veterans and for going above and beyond to help the Veteran reach self-sufficiency.



From right to left, Veterans Nursing Home resident Delbert Boyington, Paul Morin, National Commander of the American Legion and Bill Christoffersen, National Executive Committeeman of the American Legion.

A TALE FROM WORLD WAR II: PLOESTI

From the POW Advisory Committee, VA Regional Office

IN 1943-44, an oil field in Romania, Ploesti, was the most feared of all targets in Southern Europe. Not far from the mythical home of Bram Stokers “Count Dracula”, lies a vast oil field, which in 1943 produced an estimated 35% of the crude oil required by Hitler’s Nazi war machine. Antiaircraft guns very heavily defended all oil refineries, with Ploesti as one of the toughest. This was because the shells from the antiaircraft weapons were set to explode at a preset altitude in a great ball of smoke with jagged pieces of shrapnel, called “flak”, going out in all directions. If the burst was close enough to an aircraft, the 60,000 lb plane would bounce like an auto on a bumpy road. It would tear holes in the aluminum “skin” of the plane as it raced thru the inside, hitting anything in the way, and out the far side, often taking out one or more engines, at times leaving wounded, or worse.

The Ploesti oil fields were one of many subjects discussed at a secret meeting in Casablanca for 10 days in January, 1943 between President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and other Allied leaders. There, the strategy of conduct of the War was planned, and Ploesti with her 14 oil refineries rated as a High Priority target.

August 1, 1943 was on a hot dusty day in Libya in North Africa, when groups of B-24 bombers lifted off the runway to make a surprise attack on the Ploesti oil fields—a distance of 1350 miles each way—with little margin for error. The new 8-24 “Liberator” bombers were the only aircraft with the range to make such a journey. It was a day that would later be known as “Black Sunday”, and for good reason. This was the first large scale attack to come in below their radar systems, at low tree top level for maximum surprise. Each Bomb Group was assigned a special target. All refineries were to be hit in one wave of all of the 178 bombers, the name of the mission-Tidal Wave.

One of the first things to go wrong on this day was that the lead plane was flying so low it missed the checkpoint and in the confusion of battle, some crews made bomb runs thru targets that had already been attacked. The second wave of planes was caught in bursts of delayed action bombs that had been dropped earlier. There have always been differing stories on what exactly happened that day, but all agree that they did major damage and slowed the German onslaught.

Of the 178 B-24’s with 1,726 crew members, 161 reached the target, 44 were lost due to enemy fire and 532 men were missing in action. Seven airmen were interned in Turkey. There would be many return trips, mostly from the newly liberated Southern Italy in 1944, always with terrible losses. From April to August, the 15th Air Force hit Ploesti 22 times. The cost was 237 heavy bombers (including 15 British RAF night fighters), 10 dive-bombers and 39 fighters flying escort. More than 2,200 American airmen were lost in those attacks.

Russian armies swept in from the East, driving out the Germans and overrun the oil fields in mid August, 1944, which put an end to the toughest, most feared target in So. Europe.

Sixty years later, on August 1, 2003, a group of survivors’ of the Ploesti attacks gathered in Salt Lake City to remember one of the most daring, heavy bomber raids of World War II. Organizers brought together five separate bomb groups that destroyed the Ploesti oil fields, along with those who were taken prisoner.

State Veteran’s Nursing Home Gets New Edition

By Jeff Hanson, State Officer

Five years ago Delbert Boyington approached State Officer, Jeff Hanson, on the possibility of building on a chapel to better accommodate the large number of veterans and family members attending church services at the Utah State Veterans’ Nursing Home. With the support of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the LDS church and the State of Utah, Delbert’s dream is only months away from becoming a reality.

The chapel / multipurpose room will be approximately 3,000 square feet upstairs with

an unfinished basement of approximately 2,000 square feet. The upstairs space will be used as a nondenominational chapel for any faith to hold services and to worship in private. The space will also be used as a multipurpose room to better accommodate the many entertainment programs that come in to entertain the veterans throughout the week.

Currently the dining room is the only space large enough to accommodate church services and group activities. This new addition will allow the dietary program more space in the existing dining room to expand and improve the dining experience for the veterans.

The substantial completion date on the addition is scheduled for December 28, 2007. Nursing home veterans, family members and facility staff would like to thank all the people who have helped make this improvement possible.



Dreams come true for resident Delbert Boyington, above,as construction crews break ground on a chapel / multipurpose room at the Utah State Veterans’ Nursing Home

Iwo Jima Continued from page 3

Mike would motivate his boys in training camp, he didn’t say, ‘Let’s go kill some Japanese’ or ‘let’s die for our country.’ He knew he was talking to little boys. Instead he would say, ‘You do what I say, and I’ll get you home to your mothers.’

“The last guy on this side of the statue is Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian from Arizona. Ira Hayes was one who walked off Iwo Jima. He went into the White House with my dad. President Truman told him, ‘You’re a hero.’ He told reporters, ‘How can I feel like a hero when 250 of my buddies hit the island with me and only 27 of us walked off alive?’ So you take your class at school, 250 of you spending a year together having fun, doing everything together. Then all 250 of you hit the beach, but only 27 of your classmates walk off alive. That was Ira Hayes. He had images of horror in his mind. Ira Hayes carried the pain home with him and eventually died dead drunk, face down at the age of 32½ (ten years after this picture was taken).

“The next guy, going around the statue, is Franklin Sousley from Hilltop, Kentucky. A fun-lovin’ hillbilly boy. His best friend, who is now 70, told me, ‘Yeah, you know, we took two cows up on the porch of the Hilltop General Store. Then we strung wire across the stairs so the cows couldn’t get down. Then we fed them Epsom salts. Those cows crapped all night.’ Yes, he was a fun-lovin’ hillbilly boy. Franklin died on Iwo Jima at the age of 19. When the telegram came to tell his mother that he was dead, it went to the Hilltop General Store. A barefoot boy ran that telegram up to his mother’s farm. The neighbors could hear her scream all night and into the morning. Those neighbors lived a quarter of a mile away.

“The next guy, as we continue to go around the statue, is my dad, John Bradley from Antigo, Wisconsin, where I was raised. My dad lived until 1994, but he would never give interviews. When Walter Cronkite’s producers or the New York Times would call, we were trained as little kids to say “No, I’m sorry, sir, my dad’s not here. He is in Canada fishing. No, there is no phone there, sir. No, we don’t know when he is coming back.” My dad never fished or even went to Canada. Usually, he was sitting there right at the table eating his Campbell’s soup. But we had to tell the press that he was out fishing. He didn’t want to talk to the press.

“You see, like Ira Hayes, my dad didn’t see himself as a hero. Everyone thinks these guys are heroes, ‘cause they are in a photo and on a monument. My dad knew better. He was a medic. John Bradley from

Wisconsin was a caregiver. In Iwo Jima he probably held over 200 boys as they died. And when boys died in Iwo Jima, they writhed and screamed, without any medication or help with the pain.

“When I was a little boy, my third grade teacher told me that my dad was a hero. When I went home and told my dad that, he looked at me and said, ‘I want you always to remember that the heroes of Iwo Jima are the guys who did not come back. Did NOT come back.’ “So that’s the story about six nice young boys. Three died on Iwo Jima, and three came back as national heroes. Overall, 7,000 boys died on Iwo Jima in the worst battle in the history of the Marine Corps. My voice is giving out, so I will end here. Thank you for your time.”

Suddenly, the monument wasn’t just a big old piece of metal with a flag sticking out of the top. It came to life before our eyes with the heartfelt words of a son who did indeed have a father who was a hero. Maybe not a hero for the reasons most people would believe, but a hero nonetheless.

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Origins of Veterans Day

Armistice Day, November 11, 1918 (the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month), the end of hostilities in World War I, officially received its name in America in 1926 through a Congressional resolution. It became a national holiday 12 years later by similar Congressional action. If World War I had indeed been “the war to end all wars,” November 11 might still be called Armistice Day. But in 1939, World War II broke out in Europe and shattered that dream. Of the 16 million Americans who served in the Armed Forces during World War II, more than 400,000 died.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11th as Veterans Day and called upon Americans everywhere to rededicate themselves to the cause of peace. He issued a Presidential Order directing the head of the Veterans Administration, now the Department of Veterans Affairs, to form a Veterans Day National Committee to organize and oversee the national observance of Veterans Day. In addition to fulfilling that mission, the committee oversees the annual production and distribution of the annual Veterans Day poster and this Teacher Resource Guide.

In 1968, Congress moved Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. However, it became apparent that the November 11th date was historically significant to a great many Americans. As a result, Congress formally returned the observance of Veterans Day to its traditional date in 1978.

The Veterans Day National Ceremony is held each year on November 11th at Arlington National Cemetery. At 11 a.m., a color guard, made up of members from each of the military services, renders honors to America’s war dead during a tradition-rich ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns. The President or his representative places a wreath at the Tomb and a bugler sounds “Taps.” The balance of the ceremony, including a “Parade of Flags” by numerous veterans’ service organizations, takes place inside the Memorial Amphitheater, adjacent to the Tomb.

While those who died are also remembered on Veterans Day it is intended to thank and honor all those who served honorably in the military - in wartime or peacetime. In fact, Veterans Day is largely intended to thank living veterans for their service, to acknowledge that their contributions to our national security are appreciated, and to underscore the fact that all those who served - not only those who died - have sacrificed and done their duty.

Electronic Age is Here

By John Maher, DAV Adjutant

Like most of the rest of the world, the Disabled American Veterans organization is deeply involved in the electronic age of communications.

As we move from the age of paper work to the more efficient era of immediate transmissions, our organization needs to make every effort to utilize these resources.

On the Department level, we now file our annual financial and officers reports on the DAV National Web Page membership section. Our monthly transportation reports are filed electronically and sent directly to the DAV office in Washington, DC. And the best part of this Membership section is that it is available to all chapters and units!!!!!!

Signing on with one's DAV membership number automatically assigns your range of utilization. Department Commanders and Adjutants can not only view all information on the site, but can also change and update information as necessary. Such things as department status and contact information can be updated, while chapter commanders and adjutants are allowed the same responsibility regarding their chapters. Everyone signing on to the web site can view all the information, however, only specific individuals can actually change and update the information.

There is a world of useful and interesting information on the site such as chapter standings, individual members information, mailing labels, complete membership listing by name and/or zip, recruitment statistics, process membership applications, payment submission, and magazine subscriptions. One can also check to verify their direct deposit dues deposits in the amount and date of deposit.

Also available from the national organization is the availability of individual web sites space for all chapters and department.

BENNETT ENCOURAGES UTAH VETERANS TO GET INVOLVED IN HISTORY PROJECT

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Bob Bennett (R-Utah) joins the U.S. Library of Congress in honoring and preserving the stories of America's veterans and home front civilians by participation in the Veterans History Project.

"I encourage Utahns, especially Utah veterans, to come forward and share your remarkable stories with the Veterans History Project so that our generation and generations to come can remember your heroic experiences," said Bennett, the ranking Republican member of the Senate Rules Committee that has jurisdiction over the Library of Congress. "I appreciate the effort by the Library of Congress to create this tremendous archive documenting the stories of America's greatest heroes."

The Veterans History Project is a major program of The American Folklife Center, a branch of the Library of Congress, and is tasked with documenting Americans experiences in war – World War I to present conflicts. Volunteers interested in the project can use guidelines provided by the Veterans History Project to record audio or video interviews of veterans, gather photographs, letters, memoirs, and other historical documents, and then send to the project where it will become part of the Library of Congress permanent collections. Currently there are approximately 4,000 stories online.



Sgt. Rodney M. Davis Detachment #1251, Marine Corps League, Inc, Tooele, Utah is available for Color Guard commitments, please make prior arrangements with the Detachment Commandant Hal McConnell at (435) 882-1179. From left to right, Rogelio Martinez, SGT-at-Arms; Donald J. North, Sr. Vice Commandant; Harold E. McConnell, Detachment Commandant; and Myma J. Chamberlin, Adjutant/Paymaster.

VA Announces New Nursing Academy Sites: Four Universities Partner with VA in Nursing Initiative

Office of Public Affairs, Media Relations, Washington DC

WASHINGTON — To provide compassionate, highly-trained nurses to look after the health care needs of the nation's veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is launching a new initiative that partners the Department's world-class health care system with four of the country's finest nursing schools. VA selected nursing schools in Florida, California, Utah and Connecticut for special partnerships with local VA health care facilities as part of a new VA Nursing Academy.

"The expanded role of VA in the education of nurses will ensure the Department has the nurses needed to continue our world-class health care for veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "Our strengthened partnerships with these four great nursing schools will enhance the faculty and clinical resources needed to educate nurses."

The first four nursing schools selected to take part in the new program are: University of Florida in Gainesville; San Diego State University; University of Utah in Salt Lake City; and Fairfield University in Fairfield, Conn.

The nationwide network of partner organizations, including veteran service organizations, high schools and colleges, Department of Veterans Affairs, retirement communities, historical societies, and individual volunteers is an effort to educate and connect generations while honoring the veterans of our country.

The Veterans History Project was commissioned by Congress in October 2000 to gather and archive the personal recollections of U.S. veterans. The project is the largest oral history program in American history.

To get involved and receive a Veteran History Project Field Kit with guidelines for interviewing a veteran please visit www.loc.gov/vets or call toll free (888) 371-5848.

Marine Corps League and Marine Corps League Auxiliary in Utah Continues to March

By Joseph Surace, Department Commandant, Marine Corps League

Wasatch Detachment #1291, Orem will be receiving its Charter during the month of October. Its officers will be Detachment Commandant, Walton R. Farmer (Former member of the Marine Mormon Battalion Recruit Platoon #828, one of such three platoons that shipped to MCRD, San Diego, CA during the summer of 1942.); Sr. Vice Commandant, Joseph Fuchsel; Jr. Vice Commandant, John Mullinex; Detachment Judge Advocate Harry E. Weeks; Adjutant/Paymaster, Rex Bean; Detachment Chaplain W. Mark Farrer; and Sergeant-at-Arms, Andy Farrer.

Later in October, the Department of Utah Marine Corps League Auxiliary will receive its Charter, and President-elect Dianne Warner/Kearney will be installed with her Officers.

Also, an Auxiliary Unit in Orem, Utah will receive its Charter later in October; additional details will follow in the next issue of this publication.

This will be the fifth Marine Corps League Detachment formed in Utah within the past three years, and it'll be the fourth Marine Corps League Auxiliary Unit formed during the same time period. Carry On Marines.

The four VA-nursing partnerships were selected from among 42 applications. Additional VA-nursing school partnerships will be selected in 2008 and 2009, for a total of 12 partnerships in the five-year pilot program.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing has reported that more than 42,000 qualified applicants were turned away from nursing schools in 2006 because of insufficient numbers of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space and clinical mentors. VA currently provides clinical education for approximately 100,000 health professional trainees annually, including students from more than 600 schools of nursing.

The VA Nursing Academy was recently established to address the nationwide shortage of nurses while ensuring that veterans continue to receive world class care and services.

The Academy's "Enhancing Academic Partnerships" pilot program enables competitively selected VA-nursing school partnerships to expand the number of nursing faculty, enhance the professional and scholarly development of nurses, increase student enrollment by about 1,000 students and promote innovations in nursing education.

Further information about the pilot program can be obtained from VA's Office of Academic Affiliations web site at www.va.gov/oaa.

Need a Copy of your discharge Papers?

If you've been discharged from military service, your personnel files are stored at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). NARA is the official repository for records of military personnel who have been discharged from the U.S. Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Coast Guard.

To obtain Military Records most veterans and their next-of-kin can obtain free copies of their DD Form 214 by submitting a request online at vetrecs.archives.gov. Recent military service and medical records are not online however, requests will be answered in 2-6 weeks and records will be mailed.

DAV MILITARY APPRECIATION PROGRAM

By John Maher, DAV Adjutant

Since its inception in the year 2001, the Golden Corral has been a successful project of the Disabled American Veterans. This year’s program will be celebrated on Monday, November 12, 2007.

The program, which honors all veterans and active duty military nationwide with a free diner buffet and beverage on Military Appreciation Monday allows DAV Chapters to set up a station in the restaurant foyer to distribute information and educate the community about DAV and the many free services our organization provides. Each participating DAV Department is responsible for assigning DAV representation at each Golden Corral restaurant in their department to regularly collect and account for all contributions from the provided canisters. Assigned members are also responsible for promptly delivering all donated funds to their respective Department Adjutant. It is up to the sound discretion of each Department to determine the manner and in what amounts, these publicly donated funds will be distributed to participating local chapters and ensure the funds are used for service programs. Like years in the past, the Department of Utah DAV Finance Committee has elected to distribute the funds back to the participating chapters in the equal amounts raised.

The five year total for the program is \$1,230,960 in free meals and \$1,393,883 in contributions.

Gordon H. Mansfield To Become Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Office of Public Affairs, Media Relations, Washington DC

WASHINGTON - - Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield will become the Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs following the resignation of Secretary Jim Nicholson. Secretary Nicholson tendered his resignation to President Bush on July 17, 2007, to be effective no later than October 1, 2007.

Mansfield assumes the role on October 1 under the terms of the Federal Vacancies Reform Act, where a Deputy Secretary begins to serve as the acting officer immediately and automatically upon the occurrence of the vacancy. Mansfield will serve as Acting Secretary until the United States Senate confirms the next Presidential nominee.

Appointed by President Bush in November 2003, Deputy Secretary Mansfield served as the chief operating officer for the federal government’s second largest department, responsible for a nationwide system of health care services, benefits programs and national cemeteries for America’s veterans and their dependents.

He previously served as VA Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs since August 1, 2001, serving as the legislative advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. He was responsible for VA’s Congressional relations and representing VA programs, policies, investigations and legislative agenda to Congress.

Prior to joining VA, Mr. Mansfield served as executive director of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) since April 1993. In that position, the highly decorated Vietnam veteran oversaw daily operation of PVA’s national office in Washington, D.C. Mr. Mansfield held a number of positions at PVA from 1981 to 1989, and served as the organization’s first Associate Executive Director of Government Relations.

Mr. Mansfield served as Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at the Department of Housing and Urban Development from 1989 to 1993 under President George H. W. Bush’s Administration. Prior to 1981, he practiced law in Ocala, Fla.

Mr. Mansfield received his undergraduate degree from Villanova University and law degree from the University of Miami. Following his 1964 enlistment in the Army, Mr. Mansfield served two tours of duty in Vietnam. While serving as company commander with the 101st Airborne Division during his second tour, he was wounded during the Tet Offensive of 1968 sustaining a spinal cord injury. For his actions while his unit was under fire, he was decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest personal decoration for valor in combat. He was medically retired by the U.S. Army at the grade of Captain. His other combat decorations include the Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, the Combat Infantryman’s Badge and the Presidential Unit Citation.

Mr. Mansfield is a recipient of the Presidential Distinguished Service Award and the Villanova University Alumni Human Relations Medal. He was inducted into the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame in 1997.

Did You Know . . . For Veterans with a Service Connected Disability rating and an employment handicap, you may be eligible for additional VA education programs and Vocational training?

The program is called Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR& E) and is referred to by many as “the crown jewel” of the VA. This is because the program has so many benefits and avenues for disabled Veterans to take in order to obtain substantial employment. This program is also more flexible than many VA programs and allows exceptions that are unheard of in other VA offices.

VR&E is authorized by Congress under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 31. It is sometimes referred to as the Chapter 31 program. The mission of VR&E is to help veterans with service connected disabilities to prepare for, find, and keep suitable jobs. For veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, VR&E offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible.

VR&E’s primary benefit program is vocational rehabilitation services for veterans who have a service-connected disability. To receive services a veteran must be found both **eligible and entitled**. The outcome of these services leads to suitable employment that is consistent with their aptitudes and interests, or achieving independence in their daily living.

VR&E have the following programs: comprehensive rehabilitation evaluation to determine abilities, skills, interests, and needs, vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning, employment services such as job-seeking skills, resume development, and other work readiness assistance, assistance finding and keeping a job, including the use of special employer incentives, if needed, training such as On the Job Training (OJT), apprenticeships, and non-paid work experiences, if needed, post-secondary training at a college, vocational, technical or business school, supportive rehabilitation services including case management, counseling, and referral independent living services

To be eligible for VR&E services, a veteran must: have an other than dishonorable discharge, have a service-connected disability rating of at least 10%, submit an application for VR&E services. VR&E services may be used for 12 years from either the date of separation from active military service, or date of disability rating.

Once **eligibility** is determined the veteran is scheduled to meet with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) for a comprehensive evaluation to determine whether the veteran is **entitled** to services. The comprehensive evaluation includes: an assessment interests, aptitudes, and abilities and whether service connected disabilities impair the veteran’s ability to find and/or hold a job using the occupational skills he or she has already developed, vocational exploration and goal development, The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program is authorized by Congress under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 31. It is sometimes referred to as the Chapter 31 program. The mission of VR&E is to help veterans with service-connected disabilities to prepare for, find, and keep suitable jobs. For veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, VR&E offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible, which helps determine whether a veteran has an employment handicap.

Entitlement is based on the veteran being within the 12-year basic period of eligibility and having a 20 % or greater service-connected disability rating and an employment handicap. If the service-connected disability rating is less than 20% or if the veteran is beyond the 12-year basic period of eligibility, then a serious employment handicap **must be** found to establish entitlement to VR&E services.

Once entitlement and eligibility are found, the veteran and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VR&E) work together to select a VR&E program track leading to an employment or independent living goal, identify viable employment or independent living services options, determine transferable skills, identify physical demands and other job characteristics, narrow vocational options to identify a suitable employment goal, investigate training requirements, identify resources needed to achieve rehabilitation, develop an individualized rehabilitation plan to achieve the identified employment or independent living goal to develop a rehabilitation plan.

The rehabilitation plan will specify an employment or independent living goal, identify intermediate goals, outline services and resources needed to achieve these goals. The VRC and the veteran will work together to implement the plan and achieve successful rehabilitation.

If a veteran is not entitled to services, the VRC will help the veteran locate other resources to address any rehabilitation and employment needs identified during the evaluation. To apply for VR&E programs contact your local counselors at (801) 326-2431 or call 1-800-827-1000 for details. More information can be found, along with an application at www.va.gov.

Hero Flight: Stories From Our Nation's Capitol

By Judy Lemmons, Hero of Hero Flight

Well, we did it! Our trip was a fantastic success. The hard work, the long hours, the sleepless in Utah, the tears and fears were all put aside on this Friday, September 14th.

We left Hill AFB Museum on an 11-bus convoy through an Honor Salute by hundreds of airmen as we entered into the gates on Hill AFB. Each bus had a placard in the front windshield that said "Hero Flight". There were directional signs that were beautiful that said "Hero Flight" over the WWII Monument photo.

Inside the hangar the huge American Flag hung behind the stage. Dignitaries including our Governor, senators, congressmen, mayors, base officials and literally hundreds and hundreds of airmen both inside and outside the hangar attended the ceremony that included a flag folding by the Honor Guard, moment of silence and our WWII video clip. Very emotional beginning to a very emotional weekend. Our Director of Utah's Department of Veteran Affairs went with us. The huge hangar doors were opened and right outside was a red carpet saber arch team to the aircraft. I can't tell you what a relief it was to actually see an airplane there waiting for us!

We landed at Andrews AFB being parked on Air Force One's DV parking spot and a red-carpet, saber arch greeting with airmen, base officials and cheering military and civilian employees waving flags.

We had another Purple Heart awarded at Iwo Jima that night when one of our Marines, slipped on the wet pavement, skinning his knee. A sailor fell at the Capitol and injured his arm. He didn't navigate through water like he used to. But they both took it in stride and gutted it out. Our medical team was all over them.

Saturday morning it was off to the Monument. We had a bagpiper, flag and wreath ceremony and taps to round up a wonderful visit. We then spent about two hours wandering the Mall, reflecting and pushing a lot of wheelchairs. But the weather was cool enough we didn't work up much of a sweat and everyone really enjoyed themselves. Our lunch was incredible (Arby's did an awesome job, and thank you National Network for setting it all up).

Then it was off to our banquet. Our surprise special guest was Senator Bob Dole. Just like the WWII veterans we all know and love, he came quietly to the hotel, unaccompanied, discretely in a taxi and without fanfare. I escorted him into the "service elevator" through "a slippery when wet" hallway with a few of the committee members as 8 of us, to include a service cart, shared some laughs as we crowded together to keep the surprise in tact. We scurried him into a room where he signed his books for us and took photos of our committee and our guest speaker, Admiral Floyd from the Pentagon, who also enjoyed sharing the stage with him.

Our narrator announced Senator Dole, in a very obscure manner, as another quiet hero from WWII. No political mention at all, and he was cheered and applauded as he entered the room. He shared memories of a war since past, hope for future generations, and shared some laughs with his "battle buddies" from Utah. And as things go, he went to the podium to talk, and the only three lights in the ceiling that were out, were those directly over the



podium. We held a flashlight so he could share a written quote he had. But he just took it in stride.

During dinner, one our vets were having some chest pains, eyes rolling back in his head. Once again, our medical team jumped into action, took care of the situation and 911 responded to take him to get checked out. He spent the night in the hospital, but joined us Sunday morning to continue our trip.

Sunday we went to Arlington. Had a little disconnect with the buses being able to drive right up to the Tomb. The bus driver tried to talk to Arlington Security, but to no avail. We had our letters signed by the Superintendent, but none of that changed the fact, the security told them they couldn't drive the buses up to the Tomb area. The buses parked in a parking lot below the Tomb and we had to get our vets, in wheelchairs no less, up those stairs, up the walkway to the Tomb. It was hard, but we are from UTAH, and our pioneering spirit kicked in and we did it! Nothing was going to put a damper on our trip.

We watched the Changing of the Guard twice and then were joined by Utah's senior Senator Orrin Hatch who talked to our group on the stairs of the amphitheater. His brother was killed in WWII and he has written a song for him. He had visited the gravesite of his grandfather who is buried at Arlington and his remarks were at times, very



Top right then clockwise: Dales Howells, Kenneth Watson and Albert Watson at the Memorial; James and Mary Marker await the arrival of a long anticipated aircraft in the hangar at Hill Air Force Base; Casey Kunimura shakes Congressman Rob Bishop's hand at Hill Air Force Base. Kunimura served with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team during WWII; The three remaining Johnsons, Fred, Norden and Woody prepare to register for the flight outside the Hill Aerospace Museum. Left, A Hero's Welcome Wallace Luderman and his daughter, Karen Bettilyon are greeted by a red carpet and honor guard at Andrews Air Force Base, following them off the plane is Charles Paul, Elaine Roberts and Robert Wood. Below, Judy Lemmons, "The Hero of Hero Flight" outside of the plane many thought would never arrive, at Andrews

Air Force Base, a place many thought they would never get to, without Judy's persistence and work.



emotional for him. He spent about an hour with us there and at the Visitor Center.

Then back to Andrews for our send-off. They were incredible. Everyone was a bit hungry so I made a quick call. Lt Col Auld ran to the BX and bought us some snack crackers and water. It's great to have friends in all the right places!

Our arrival at Hill just blew us away. We rounded the corner heading towards the hangar, met by the Hill AFB Fire Department with a water cannon spray over the aircraft. Then, a line of Patriot Guards with American Flags greeted the arriving Hero's. Hundreds of family, friends, met at the bottom of the stairs by the Honor Guard, red carpet, ALL the base and wing commanders and hundreds of cheering airmen. It was, to say the least, an incredible way to end our weekend.

There were more salutes, tears and cheers and my heart was full of joy for OUR VETS!

Thanks to all of you for your tremendous outpouring of love, prayers and support for our fledgling committee who were left with an uphill battle to get this trip off the ground...we so appreciate it.

Currently in Washington

Compiled by Berni Davis, Editor
There are several bills in the US Congress that, if implemented, will grant several extensions on current Veterans benefits. Here is a description of some noteworthy proposed legislation. More information can be found on each bill at www.house.gov or www.senate.gov.

H.R.81, Bartlett Montgomery GI Bill Act; this bill proposes amendments to the Montgomery GI Bill educational assistance program to allow an individual who has completed six years of service in the Armed Forces and enters into an agreement to serve at least four more years to transfer their educational assistance entitlement to their spouse, child, or a combination thereof. It would also provide a percentage annual increase in the rates of such educational assistance based on the average monthly costs of higher education.

H.R. 2623 – Hospice Care, this bill would prohibit the collection of co-payments for all hospice care furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 2874 – The Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2007; this bill addresses the needs of low-income veterans and their families by providing financial assistance for those residing in permanent housing and support services as they transition from homeless to housing. H.R. 2874 addresses the needs of veterans currently readjusting from combat duties by allowing veterans to access successful readjustment programs offered in their communities. The bill addresses the needs of veterans living in rural areas by providing program grants for transportation to department medical facilities and by providing necessary training for peer outreach services for returning service members.

H.R. 1315 – The Veterans’ Benefits Improvement Act of 2007; this bill provides specially adaptive housing assistance to disabled members of the Armed Forces residing temporarily in housing owned by a family member. The bill also establishes a scholarship program for students seeking a degree or certificate in blind rehabilitation.

H.R. 23 – The Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2007. This bill establishes a Merchant Mariner Equity Fund in the general fund of the Treasury and directs the Secretary of the VA to make monthly payments in the amount of \$1,000 to qualifying members of the U.S. Merchant Marine who served (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service) during World War II.

H.R. 67 - Passed the House on May 23, 2007 to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

H.R. 392 – Passed the House on May 23, 2007
H.R. 612 - To amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the period of eligibility for health care for combat service in the Persian Gulf War or future hostilities from two years to five years after discharge or release.

H.R. 612– Passed the House on May 23, 2007
H.R. 797 - To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve compensation benefits for veterans in certain cases of impairment of vision involving both eyes, to provide for the use of the National Directory of New Hires for income verification purposes, to extend the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide an educational assistance allowance for qualifying work study activities, and

to authorize the provision of bronze representations of the letter “V” for the graves of eligible individuals buried in private cemeteries in lieu of Government-provided headstones or markers.

H.R. 1284 - To increase, effective as of December 1, 2007, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans.
H.R. 1284– Passed the House in March 21, 2007

H.R. 1470 - To amend the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001 to require the provision of chiropractic care and services to veterans at all Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers.

H. R. 1435- To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a pilot program to reduce the backlog of claims for benefits pending with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H. R. 2201- To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish the Committee on Care of Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury in the Veterans Health Administration. The Under Secretary for Health shall appoint employees of the Department with expertise in the care of veterans with traumatic brain injury to serve on the committee.

S. 117- To amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to improve benefits and services for members of the Armed Forces, veterans of the Global War on Terrorism, and other veterans , to require reports on the effects of the Global War on Terrorism, and for other purposes.

HR 327- An Act to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement a comprehensive program designed to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans. The Secretary should take into consideration the special needs of veterans suffering from PTSD and the special needs of elderly veterans who are at high risk for depression and experience high rates of suicide in developing and implementing the program.

Matheson Bill Saves Seniors’ Housing Program; Included in Housing Act

By Alyson Heyrend Communications Director Rep. Jim Matheson

Washington D.C.—Congressman Jim Matheson says millions more elderly homeowners who want to tap into their home equity with “reverse mortgages” will have that option, under bipartisan housing legislation approved in the House today. The Expanding American Homeownership Act of 2007 – HR 1852—includes the reverse mortgage provisions of Matheson’s bill (HR 391) which initially passed back in January.

A reverse mortgage is a unique loan that enables senior homeowners to stay in their homes and remain financially independent by converting part of the equity without having to sell the home, give up title or take on a new monthly mortgage payment. “If you love your home and want to stay in it for years to come, then a reverse mortgage is a safe bet for retirement security,” Matheson said. “Reverse mortgages offer seniors the financial freedom they deserve.”

Matheson said the bill lifts the current limit of 275,000 reverse mortgages that the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) can insure. FHA insures reverse mortgages that can be used by homeowners age 62 and older to convert their home’s equity into a monthly income stream or a line of credit to be repaid when they no longer occupy the home. The majority of loan recipients are elderly widows, who may use the money on health care, medicine, home repairs or other needs.

According to FHA, an additional two million senior citizens could tap into their home equity if this bill becomes law.

The legislation also increases the market share of mortgages insured by the FHA and seeks to encourage greater stability in the mortgage market in coming years.

Advertisement

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Reverse Mortgages are definitely on the rise!! Senior homeowner are taking equity out of their long time residence to make ends meet during their retirement years. To remodel their homes, help their children, or pending medical or home care or to purchase a second home. All with the security of remaining in your home with no mortgage payment for your lifetime!

You can also save your home from foreclosure with a reverse mortgage!

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Cindy Bass
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VA's Suicide Hot Line Begins Operations

Nicholson: "Help a Phone Call Away"

Office of Public Affairs, Media Relations, Washington

WASHINGTON – To ensure veterans with emotional crises have round-the-clock access to trained professionals, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun operation of a national suicide prevention hot line for veterans.

"Veterans need to know these VA professionals are literally a phone call away," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson said. "All service members who experience the stresses of combat can have wounds on their minds as well as their bodies. Veterans should see mental health services as another benefit they have earned, which the men and women of VA are honored to provide."

The toll-free hot line number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). VA's hot line will be staffed by mental health professionals in Canandaigua, N.Y. They will take toll-free calls from across the country and work closely with local VA mental health providers to help callers.

To operate the national hot line, VA is partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

"The hot line will put veterans in touch – any time of the day or night, any day of the week, from anywhere in the country – with trained, caring professionals who can help," added Nicholson. "This is another example of the VA's commitment to provide world-class health care for our nation's veterans, especially combat veterans newly returned from Iraq and Afghanistan."

The suicide hot line is among several enhancements to mental health care that Nicholson has announced this year. In mid July, the Department's top mental health professionals convened in the Washington, D.C., area to review the services provided to veterans of the Global War on Terror.

VA is the largest provider of mental health care in the nation. This year, the Department will spent about \$3 billion for mental health. More than 9,000 mental health professionals, backed up by primary care physicians and other health professionals in every VA medical center and outpatient clinic, provide mental health care to about 1 million veterans each year.

House Veterans' Affairs Committee Holds Symposium on Traumatic Brain Injury

Roundtable Discussion Addresses the Signature Injury of the War in Iraq

Office of Public Affairs, Media Relations, Washington

Both Democratic and Republican Members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee in attendance, Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) led a symposium to address innovative and comprehensive ways to provide treatment for traumatic brain injury (TBI). TBI is considered the signature injury of the war in Iraq. Among veterans and service members from Iraq and Afghanistan treated at Walter Reed for injuries of any type, approximately 65% have TBI as a primary diagnosis or simultaneous injury.

"This symposium is intended to open up the broader thought process of how to make certain that we have the capacity, the capability, and the expertise to meet the readjustment and rehabilitation needs of these veterans both short and long term," said Chairman Filner. "Taking care of the wounded is an obligation we owe to those who have sacrificed so much for our country and that is why I am conducting this symposium today."

Participants in the TBI Symposium included: Dave Woodruff and Rene Bardorf from the Bob Woodruff Family Fund for Traumatic Brain Injury; Dr. Ross D. Zafonte from University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine; Dr. Ronald M. Ruff of the National Academy of Neuropsychology; Dr. Jim C. Schraa from the Brain Injury Association of America; Dr. Henry Lew from Stanford University Medical Center; Dr. Orest B. Boyko and Dr.

Jeffrey Eliot Galpin of Brain Matters, Inc.; Meredith Beck of the Wounded Warriors Project; Dr. Richard Hodder from the Northeast Center for Special Care; Dr. Joseph J. Fins of Weill Medical College of Cornell University; Peter J. Bunce, a family member of a TBI veteran; Dr. Holger Weis of NovaVision, Inc.; and Dr. Barbara Sigford from the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

Participants discussed the need for a coordinated effort for case management for TBI patients, not just during the initial injury phase, but throughout the life of the patient. Also noted was the importance of educating and training family members on what to expect from their TBI patient.

The Chairman referred to legislation passed by the House of Representatives that would direct the VA to improve and expand its ability to provide TBI care, services and research. H.R. 2199 establishes an innovative program to deliver health care services to rural veterans and establishes and Advisory Committee to assist the VA in improving care and services for rural veterans. The bill will next be heard in the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

"TBI is a devastating injury and impacts not only the lives of the service members but also the lives of their family members," said Chairman Filner. "There exists a real need to educate and train family members as well as assist them through the process of adjusting to the circumstances they now face. Today's discussion brought together experts with a range of different experiences to identify the specific issues facing our veterans. This forum is intended to bring about productive problem solving tactics and I am pleased that Members of both parties were able to participate."

Attention OIF/OEF Veterans: Are you enrolled for care with the VA Health Care System? Did you know that you are eligible for two years of care following your deployment under Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom? Call 1-800-613-4012 to access the benefits that you have earned.



George Wahlen VA Medical Center, photo courtesy of VA Health Care System, Salt Lake City.

VA MEDICAL CENTER HOSTS VETERANS' OPEN HOUSE

From: VA Salt Lake City Health Care System, Susan M. Huff, Public Affairs Officer, George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center

SALT LAKE CITY, UT – The Department of Veterans Affairs Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS) is inviting veterans, active duty military personnel, their families and significant others to a community-wide welcome home outreach. The event titled "Welcome to Your VA – Our Community is Proud of You," is scheduled for Saturday, October 27, 2007, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., on the George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center campus, 500 Foothill Drive, Salt Lake City.

"Our event will provide our veterans an introduction to the services available to them from the VA and many of our community partners," said James R. Floyd, director VASLCHCS. More than 50 state and federal organizations, as well as local colleges and universities will be on site to assist veterans and their families.

Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will have an opportunity to complete the health care benefits enrollment process, discuss education, home loan, and other benefits available to them through the Veterans Benefits Administration, and the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs.

"To help raise awareness among our veterans and

their families, our community is coming together to provide a variety of information and activities for the family members to include health screenings, a children's corner, and a special presentation of Battlemind – Continuing the Transition Home," said Floyd.

Activities are free. For more information or to request a schedule of events, contact the VASLCHCS Public Affairs Office at (801) 584-1252.

If you have a story, article or suggestion that you would like to see in your next Veterans Voice send it to us. Email editor at berni.davis@va.gov.

VA Reaches Out to Former Prisoners of War: Department Enlists Public’s Help in Contacting Former POWs

Office of Public Affairs, Media Relations, Washington

WASHINGTON (Sept. 24, 2007) — Do you know any former prisoners of war (POW) or their family members? If so, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) needs your help.

VA is once again reaching out to former prisoners of war not currently using VA benefits and services, urging them to contact the Department to find out if they are eligible for health care, disability compensation and other services.

“One of VA’s highest priorities is meeting the needs of former prisoners of war,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson.

“They are extraordinary men and women who have endured captivity, suffered extreme deprivation and sacrificed their own freedom to preserve the freedom of all Americans.”

VA estimates more than 25,000 former prisoners of war are alive today. VA is trying to contact the remaining POW’s not receiving any benefits or health care through an outreach program that includes asking citizens to pass the word to veterans they know.

VA also extends a helping hand to the surviving spouses and family members of former POWs, who may be eligible for certain benefits and services.

In recent years, VA has expanded benefits to all former POWs with strokes and certain common heart diseases. More than a dozen other diseases were already covered.

The government’s effort to inform former POWs about improvements in benefits faces a particular hurdle with older veterans who may not have been in touch with VA for decades.

A majority of former POWs are veterans of World War II, and their military service was before the use of Social Security numbers as military “service numbers.” As a result, it is difficult for VA to track down those who have not been in contact with the Department in recent years.

During recent years through a nationwide outreach campaign that included direct mailings and the help of news media and veteran’s organizations, VA has added hundreds of former POWs to its compensation rolls, people who had not previously been receiving benefits to which they were entitled.

If you know a former POW, please ask him or her to contact VA <<POW Outreach.doc>> at 1-800-827-1000.

Bipartisan Legislation asks Sentencing Commission to Review Laws that Protect Veteran Grave Markers

May Our Veterans Rest in Peace

The Air Force Association recently pledged its support to Congressman Chris Carney’s legislative initiative, the “May Our Veterans Rest in Peace Act of 2007”. There has been a significant increase in the theft of grave markers from our veterans’ cemeteries and current sentencing guidelines for those convicted of such crimes are not serving as an adequate deterrent. AFA supports significantly increasing the penalties in section 994 of title 28, United States Code. The desecration, theft and trafficking in grave markers and monuments from our veterans cemeteries is a despicable act and one that warrants escalating punishment standards higher than are available in the current code. More information on Representative Carney’s proposed legislation.

Personality Disorder? House Veterans’ Affairs Committee finds that veterans given a Personality Disorder diagnosis by the military are unduly prejudiced when they seek VA health care and benefits

From Office of Public Affairs, Media Relations, Washington

Washington, D.C. – Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) held a hearing to examine how the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) addresses the military diagnosis of Personality Disorder. In the last six years, the military has discharged over 22,500 service members due to Personality Disorders. The Committee found that once a service member is diagnosed with a Personality Disorder, he or she has a much more difficult time receiving benefits and treatment at the VA.

Service members discharged due to a Personality Disorder, rather than PTSD or some other mental health condition, are generally not provided military disability benefits because the military classifies Personality Disorders as existing prior to entry into military service. The service member must show that his prior existing condition was aggravated or worsened by military service, which is difficult to do. Service members can seek veterans’ disability benefits, but again they must show that their condition was aggravated by military service.

“Providing veterans with the correct medical diagnosis is important for a variety of reasons, ranging from receiving proper treatment to eligibility for military and veterans benefits,” said Chairman Filner. “My concern is that this country is regressing and again ignoring the legitimate claims of PTSD in favor of the time and money saving diagnosis of Personality Disorder. I am not satisfied with the standards by which the VA accepts or denies disability claims from our veterans diagnosed with Personality Disorders.”

Joshua Kors, a journalist that been reporting on Personality Disorder for the last ten months, stated that a Personality Disorder discharge is a “contradiction in terms. Recruits who have a severe, preexisting condition like a Personality Disorder do

House of Representatives Passes Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2007

Washington, D.C. – Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Bob Filner (D-CA) announced that the House of Representatives passed H.R. 23, The Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2007. The bill would establish a Merchant Mariner Equity Compensation Fund to provide monthly payments in the amount of \$1,000 to qualifying members of the United States Merchant Marine who served during World War II. H.R. 23 includes qualifying members of the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service.

“The House of Representatives took the opportunity to correct a grave injustice heaped upon the gallant men of the Merchant Marine of World War II,” stated Chairman Filner. “We call our veterans ‘heroes’ for a reason and the heroes from past wars deserve all the care and dignity that this nation can bestow. We will work boldly and tirelessly to move this legislation forward.”

Do you have questions about VA state or federal benefits? Do you need to file a claim for Service Connected Disability or pension? If you would like to meet with a representative of the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs, one will be in your area at your local Department of Workforce Service Office. Call 1-800-894-9497 or go to veterans.utah.gov/outreach/index.html for a schedule or more information.

not pass the rigorous screening process and are not accepted into the Army.” Kors interviewed soldiers that passed the first screening and were accepted into the Army. “They were deemed physically and psychologically fit in a second screening as well, before being deployed to Iraq, and served honorably there in combat,” said Kors. “In each case, it was only when they came back physically or psychologically wounded and sought benefits that their preexisting condition was discovered.”

The committee also reviewed the recent report by the Institute of Medicine on VA Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) claims and discussed the VA’s plan for implementation of recommendations in the report. Current estimates show that approximately one-third of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans may show signs of PTSD.

“The nation’s veterans’ health care system is strained to the breaking point,” said Chairman Filner. “The Institute of Medicine reports that the VA needs to replace its narrowly defined and unevenly applied criteria for PTSD screening with broader standards based on the latest knowledge about psychiatry. I intend to work with the VA to address these recommendations and provide the appropriate care for our veterans.”

Participants in the full committee hearing included: Colonel Bruce Crow, chief of the Department of Behavioral Medicine at Brooke Army Medical Center and clinical psychology consultant to the Army surgeon general; Jason Forrester, director of policy for Veterans for America; veteran Jonathan Town; journalist Joshua Kors; Paul Sullivan, executive director for Veterans for Common Sense; psychologist Tracie Shea, Ph.D. from the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Clinic at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center Providence, RI; Dean G. Kilpatrick, Ph.D., member of the Committee on Veterans’ Compensation for PTSD at the Institute of Medicine; Sally Satel, M.D., resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute; and Ira R. Katz, MD, Ph.D from the Mental Health Veterans Health Administration at the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 23 rectifies the mistreatment that the Mariners suffered by being denied GI Bill benefits at the end of WWII and compensates them, over sixty years later, for their heroic deeds. The Merchant Mariner Equity Compensation Fund would be available only to all qualifying mariners who apply by October 1, 2008.

The Merchant Mariners of World War II were granted veteran status in 1988 after fighting for over forty years to attain it. Their casualty rate was one in twenty six, the highest of any of the other armed branches of service. It is indisputable that the United States would not have been able to begin, sustain of end WWII without their service.

“I am pleased that the House of Representatives passed The Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2007,” concluded Chairman Filner. “The heroic and brave service of these veterans has gone unheralded by this country for too long. We owe these heroes a thank you and today, we are one step closer to righting this wrong – ONCE AND FOR ALL. These veterans kept their promises to serve our country and it is not too late to keep our promises to those that have fought for our country.”

The Disabled American Veterans sponsors a van that runs throughout the region transporting Veterans to their appointments at the George Wahlen VA Medical Center and then back home. To schedule an appointment for the van call the numbers listed below:

VAN TIMES AND LOCATIONS

NORTHERN ROUTE

- 02:15 AM—SAGE JUNCTION (EXIT 33 OFF FREEWAY 1-15)
- 02:45 AM—ASHTON (DAVE’S JUBILEE GROCERY STORE)
- 03:15 AM—ST. ANTHONY (MAVERICK STATION) (S. BRIDGE ST. AND 3RD S.)
- 03:45 AM--REXBURG (MAVERICK STATION) (MAIN ST. AND SECOND WEST)
- 04:15 AM—RIGBY (MAVERICK STATION MAIN AND CLARK ST.)
- 04:45 AM—IDAHO FALLS (CHEVRON and McDONALDS) (BROADWAY AND SATURN)
- 05:15 AM—BLACKFOOT (FLYING J) (228 PARKWAY DR)
- 05:30 AM-FORT HALL (GAS STATION BY CASINO)

SOUTHERN ROUTE

- 05:45 AM—POCATELLO (VET CENTER 1800 GARRET WAY) (WESTWOOD VILLAGE MALL)
- 06:15 AM—McCAMMON (FLYING.J) (BY FREEWAY 1-15)
- 06:30 AM-DOWNEY (FLAGS WEST TRUCK STOP) (OFF FREEWAY 1-15)
- 06:45 AM—MALAD (CHEVRON STATION) (EXIT 13 OFF FREEWAY 1-15)
- 07:15 AM—TREMONTON (SINCLAIR STATION) (EXIT 40 OFF HIGHWAY 84)
- 07:35 AM—BRIGHAM CITY (FLYING J EXIT 362 OFF 1-15)

ARRIVAL AT VA HOSPITAL IS BETWEEN 08:30 TO 09:00 APPOINTMENTS MUST BE BETWEEN 09:00 TO 14:00

THE VAN DEPARTS HOSPITAL WHEN THE LAST VETERAN IS DONE

**2007/2008 VAN SCHEDULE
for IDAHO, PRICE
and ST. GEORGE**

FOR APPOINTMENTS CALL:
IDAHO: (208) 221-0362
PRICE, ST. GEORGE : 1-800-613-4012
x2003

OCTOBER 1,3,5,9, 11, 15, 17, 19,
3,25,29,31 HOLIDAY ON 8
NOVEMBER 2, 6, 8, 14, 16,20, 26,
28,30 HOLIDAY 12, 22
DECEMBER 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 18,
20, 24, 26, 28, HOLIDAY 25
JANUARY 3, 7, 9, 11, 15, 17, 23,
25, 29, 31 HOLIDAY ON 1, 21
FEBRUARY 4, 6, 8, 12, 14, 18, 20,
22, 26, 28 HOLIDAY on 18

**2007/2008 VAN SCHEDULE
for LOGAN, VERNAL, ELKO,
ELY, AFTON, ROCK SPRINGS**

FOR APPOINTMENTS CALL:
WY AND NV: (307) 886-5293
LOGAN AND VERNAL: 1-800-613-4012
x2003

OCTOBER 2,4, 10, 12, 16, 18, 22,
24, 26, 30 HOLIDAY ON 8
NOVEMBER 1,5,7,9,13,15,19,21,
23,27, 29 HOLIDAY 12,22
DECEMBER 3,5,7, 11, 13, 17, 19,
21, 27, 31 HOLIDAY 25
JANUARY 2, 4, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18,
22, 24, 28, 30, HOLIDAY on 1, 21
FEBRUARY 1, 5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 19,
21, 25, 27, 29, HOLIDAY on 18